**scalpel to your heart**

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# scalpel to your heart

by raquine

Summary

> “Touch is intimate. It requires great trust to leave your body in the hands of another. Perhaps some give this trust too easily.”
>
> Will freezes. “Not a very reassuring thing to say with your fingers in my stab wound.”

Ten years before canon, homicide detective Will Graham meets Dr. Lecter in the emergency room. Nothing is going his way today—of course he ends up with the potentially psychopathic surgeon. What else did he expect?

# lightning flash

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He's going to bleed out in this emergency room. Many thanks to John Hopkins Hospital and their undying devotion to the wounded.

It's a histrionic thought, Will knows, but his nerves are on edge and he's been here for half an hour so maybe the petulance is warranted. Stark white lights, the bitter seethe of electricity, and no nurses in sight since they said to wait for the surgeon. Throb after throb. Heartbeat in his shoulder. Dull aches, sharp aches.

Still no surgeon.

His shirt is sticky with wet blood and dried cruor, clinging to his back like glue. It's suffocating, this stench of sickness. Iron and copper and steel. Knife twisting in, tearing out. Here is the whole and irreducible self, one blade away from necrosis. A pinprick from mortality.

Vaguely, Will is conscious of his shaking hands, shuddering muscles. He's never been good with hospitals. So much pain and torment crowded into one building, a spilling deluge of sour sweat and salty tears. His empathy conquers him, soaks up every sob like a sponge.

It is inescapable. His arteries pulse with unknown plasma.

Eight years old in a Biloxi emergency room, knee skinned to bone and only feeling the wails of children around him, their smashed teeth and bent limbs. Fourteen years old in Greenville, following his father from the back of an ambulance to the ICU, surrounded by the young and drunk, old and sickly, the blur of incoherence. Twenty years old in—

He cuts himself short, fingers digging into thighs. This train of thought isn't helping anything. Inhale, hold. *Control yourself. Get it together.* Hold, exhale. A steaming hiss through clenched teeth.

Focus on the present, except the present is blank walls and bleeding wounds and piercing pressure in his head, hammering in sick undulations. It's the slick sweat on his palms where he held the pistol, the static dancing in his vision as he stared and stared but didn't move, didn't run. Didn't shoot.

*If I start, I won't be able to stop. I won't stop.*

Without a doubt, he's fired. They won't say it officially—no, it'll be soothing assurances of 'compassionate leave' and 'resting up the shoulder', then he'll stumble into work and find himself in a completely different unit. If they even keep him in a unit at all.

Will Graham, the homicide cop who couldn't pull the trigger. He doesn't exactly have a reputation to uphold—that's been sullied by unintentional whims—yet it still tastes bitter on the tongue. A career failure and personal shortcoming.

But he doesn't regret it.

He should've stuck to boatyards and bayous, spent his days as a humble mechanic on Louisiana shores. It's a nauseating comfort, acrid familiarity in his gut like tobacco teeth and a swollen sun. Arthritic bones in a sweat-stained armchair, fabric that drinks in moisture like butter. Dim walls and dimmer lighting, pantry bugs in the kitchen because the landlord lied and they have nowhere to stay for pest control.

Like father like son, but he rejects his kin and upbringing. Family is a faint and fickle thing.

"Mr. Graham?"

Silky and lilted, a voice startles him from rumination. It holds an accent he can't quite place.

A surgeon?

Will blinks, studying the man at the door. He is clad in navy scrubs and a thin lanyard—a surgeon! Tall and broadly built, six foot or so. Middle-aged, around ten years older. Toned arms. Large hands. He steals a glance at his face, filtering through light and colour to find his jaw is chiseled, skin supple and smooth. Light cropped hair, dark narrow eyes; an objectively attractive man.

Instantly, he's formed a vague profile. Upper class, socially admired. Particularly concerned with his image and presentation. Polite but stern, takes his job seriously—yet not serious enough to be punctual when a patient is bleeding out, apparently. Will's vision is still spinning.

He could be a psychopath, a murderer. He could be a nice and normal man. With some people, the lines are blurry. It's impossible to tell.

"That's me," Will says after a beat, averting his eyes.

Hopefully the surgeon isn't talkative, because he needs to be in and out of here as soon as possible. This was a demand from his chief, not a personal choice. There's nothing bandages and antiseptic can't fix.

The man strides in, all silent surety. "Good evening. My name is Dr. Hannibal Lecter, and I'm terribly sorry for the wait. There was a miscommunication with your allocated emergency surgeon, and so I was called early in his place."

A miscommunication? Will would scoff, but considers the glaring keyword 'early'. His eyes crawl to the clock—half past two in the morning—and feels a fraction of his bitterness wither. At least he's not the only one working overtime.

"It's fine." Will is too drained to gripe, but sounds unintentionally hostile.

Dr. Lecter washes his hands and snatches a pair of gloves from the dispenser, holding steady eye contact all the while. Direct, abrasive. The sensation makes his skin crawl.

“How long have you been waiting?”

Hoping to end the conversation, he answers flatly, “Half an hour.”

“That’s terrible.” Pale knitted brows. Clinical compassion. “Your wound is still bleeding.”

“It’s fine.” Repetition. Monotony. Will tries to shrug, but his shoulder screams at the effort.

The air is sickeningly thick in here, stirred only by the grating beep of machines, buzzing fluorescent lights. He’s sat on an examination table and his shoulder blades gouge into the wall, pounding with discomfort. No respite for his shoulders tonight.

Dropping the topic, Dr. Lecter skirts to his side and works quickly to peel back gauze. Inhale, exhale. Thin latex skimming tissue. Everyone knows surgeons make exceptional serial killers.

“Not fond of touch, are you?”

It is a statement, not a question. Almost a taunt. Will stifles the urge to bite.

“Touch is uncomfortable,” he says, aiming to shut him up. “Flesh on flesh, skin on skin. Foreign matter where it’s not supposed to be. And it’s hard to focus when you’re thinking, her hands are *really* cold, or, oh, he must have hyperhidrosis!”

Verbal sewage, spewed out like bile. He didn’t mean to say all of that. From his periphery, Dr. Lecter’s eyes crinkle in amusement and Will is seized by something violently mortifying.

“So, yeah.” A taut silence, and the mortification heightens. “I try to avoid touch whenever possible.”

The rumble of laughing nurses. A crying patient. Slammed doors, instructions rattling through the intercom. Will presses against the wall, firm pain chasing his shoulder blades.

“Touch is intimate.” Dr. Lecter rips away soiled gauze, brutal and seamless. “It requires great trust to leave your body in the hands of another. Perhaps some give this trust too easily.”

The room turns frigid.

“Not a very reassuring thing to say with your fingers in my stab wound.”

It really isn’t.

“My apologies,” he says, not sounding apologetic at all, “but in the medical field this is a lesson you learn quickly. I assume it’s similar in yours. You work for the police, correct?”

This close, Will can smell something richly clean, not overpowering. Pleasant and fresh, like sunlight on a winter morning, dewy grass after rain—smothered under hospital air freshener

and sterile artifice. Not quite the scent of death and danger, but maybe more the reason to fear it. Will is acutely aware of his own odour, copper and sweat and unwashed skin.

“Yeah.” His shoulder squirms beneath the surgeon’s touch. “Homicide detective.”

Dr. Lecter hums, feigned intrigue. “Investigating the Jester murders? An awful tragedy. I’ve heard about it in the news.”

Their eyes meet and he swallows, looking away. “I came here from New Orleans. Can’t say this is a great first impression.”

A curious pause. Will tries to smile, but the motion sits wrong on his face, melting like wax. That was the wrong thing to say—he doesn’t *want* to discuss his background. Why did he say that?

“New Orleans? You’re rather far from home.” His attention is piqued, but thankfully professionalism overrides. “I’m going to rinse your shoulder. Rest your arm here, please.”

Reluctant, he follows the instruction. Dr. Lecter is gentle while propping his arm up, delicate while edging down Will’s shirt—an obvious obstruction. They both know it.

“Are you comfortable removing your shirt?”

A swaying surge of malaise.

Will hesitates before complying, viscid blood clinging to his sleeves, his back. In this cramped room there is no distance from Dr. Lecter’s gaze, this keen, penetrating thing. He isn’t a self-conscious man, but today Will is frigid in discomfort, the primal urge to hunch over and hug his abdomen like a child. Shield his organs from the glacial scrutiny of Dr. Lecter.

Maybe he’s being paranoid. *Stress response. Shock.* Even so, Will is rarely paranoid without reason.

“Thank you, Mr. Graham.” Dr. Lecter returns to his shoulder, grazing past torn tissue.

Too formal. Too fatherly. “Just call me Will.”

“Thank you, Will.” The abrupt hiss of water, screeching nerves. Will squeezes the table. “If I may ask, why have you come so far? I doubt there is a shortage of detectives in Baltimore.”

*None of your business, Doctor,* but the urge to speak washes over him in a slow and dizzy wave. A disconcerting reaction—it must be the blood loss. His brain is deoxygenated. Tongue loose. Head fuzzy. Shoulder pulsing, pulsing, pulsing.

“I have an overactive imagination,” he says, almost laughing. “Baltimore PD thought I could be useful.”

The atmosphere shifts. Dr. Lecter doesn’t flinch but his attitude changes almost imperceptibly.

“Your imagination lead you to the dragon’s den.” His cadence is indecipherable. “Tell me more.”

Will could shut up completely, not say another word. He could storm out, slap on a bandaid and never return to this conversation again.

And yet, he doesn’t want to. Another stolen glance and Dr. Lecter is cleaning his shoulder in complete immersion, not looking up but listening intently. Unsettling but warm. Something about him has Will curious.

“I can…emphasise with killers. With anyone, really.” A pause, uncertain. He scrubs a hand across his face. “Reconstruct what they did, why they did it. Like I said, overactive imagination.”

From the corner of his eye, Dr. Lecter splits into a smile. “Pure empathy. A remarkable yet double-edged gift.”

“Not remarkable.” Will rubs his neck. “Grotesque, but useful. Like a chair made of antlers.”

“Hence the double-edge.” He regards him with peculiar sincerity. “This is quite a nasty puncture. Your assailant pierced the rotator cuff.”

“Great.” Will sighs without thinking. “That means…?”

“Unfortunately, chronic pain is almost guaranteed. This may include tenderness, joint aches and nerve pain that worsens with the cold. Unpleasant, but manageable with physiotherapy.”

Will Graham, the eternal magnet of luck and fortune. Fate bears him gifts in golden baskets. Slit him open to find a bouquet of rubies, glistening sick and red in the sun.

“I’ll have to get used to Weaver.” Will stares at the ceiling, a glittering spiderweb suspended in dust. He sounds as dull as he feels.

Dr. Lecter nods in polite sympathy, and in this hazy smog it’s difficult to track the movement. Still, his trembling has calmed and breathing comes easier, even as the surgeon probes and pries.

Fingers in his body. Eyes on his soul, hidden under yielding fascia. The skeleton is unsightly. Inside is worse.

“I’m going to use local anesthesia while suturing the wound. Is that alright?”

Will nods, snaking a hand into his hair, the nape of his neck. He’s never been good with anaesthesia, even local. It doesn’t cause cognitive impairment, but the concept of any part of him being numb, out of his control…

Under the control of someone else. That’s what it is.

Dr. Lecter works swiftly, delivering a pointed sting then a cutting flare, dispersing as quick as it comes. Relinquishing autonomy to the strong hands and steady baritone of Dr. Lecter, his

uncanny kindness.

Like this situation spared him any autonomy to begin with.

“Good,” he murmurs into the wound, tickling fissure edges. In Will’s stomach, a sudden sharp stutter laces through the discomfort. “Let that circulate.”

Strange. Will shakes away the sensation.

Dr. Lecter sits at his side, chair lowered for a better angle. Hands firm but gentle. Fingertips smooth and gloved. Eyes fixed only on the puncture, absorbed in his craft—a pleasantly comfortable avoidance.

Pain seeps from his shoulder like a dying sun, and Will fights the pleasure of numbness, of startling ease.

Like this, he wouldn’t know if Dr. Lecter widened the wound. He wouldn’t feel the mutilation.

The delicate rupture of veins, sweetly sundered sinew—it would be nothing but a flicked wrist. No pain, no clarity. He would be oblivious until the blood spurts.

“Can you feel this?” Dr. Lecter taps the needle on his shoulder, the lips of the lesion. Hot breath itches his neck. Too close.

“I can feel pressure.” A slow, shaky inhale. “But no pain.”

“Very good,” Hannibal says, and there it is again—heat rippling in his gut, callous and coiling. With his free hand, he wipes sudor on his slacks.

Will shouldn’t be so…reactive. Something is wrong with this surgeon. His words taste of obfuscation and smoke. Everything he does is coated with malevolence. He’s going to pop his brachial artery like a water balloon.

Another histrionic thought, but the possibility is there. Briefly, he surrenders to imagination.

Dr. Lecter, slicing him open with a suture needle and worming through flesh. Severing frantic arteries, lazy veins. Surgical. Detached, but savouring the hunt. Humiliation whispered into the concave fissure left behind—a sadistic killer. Enjoys anatomy, the art of anatomy.

Claw out his nerves and tie them into ribbons splaying outwards, touching everything, feeling everything; this filthy air. Nerve confetti. Facing his fears and sensitivities. Soft pale strings —edible. A formal colleague dinner party.

“Loosen your shoulders, please.”

Static churning, white noise in his ears. Hinds raising like a dog.

“Are you like this with all your patients?”

Again, the hostility was unintentional. Maybe his nerves are already on display. Corpse inverted.

Dr. Lecter blinks but doesn't pause. "I'm afraid you'll need to be more specific."

"So…" His head cramps with tension. "I don't know. Talkative."

Dr. Lecter blinks again, and Will could die from the shame.

"I can be silent if you prefer." He picks up thread, sniffs, then chooses another colour. Odd. "I always try to tailor conversation to my patient's preferences, but it was my assumption that talking relaxed you. You appear calmer than when we started."

Sudden pressure, the tug of thread. Will stifles a grimace—the talking *has* relaxed him, but set him on edge simultaneously. It feels like fever, shivering through boiling heat. Simmering in the throes of winter.

"No, it's…" The words tumble out like skipped pebbles. "It's fine. I don't know. Sorry."

Breath on his neck. Fingers on his skin.

"Never apologise for speaking your mind." Dr. Lecter speaks into the wound, sparking numb edges. Will grips the table. "I'm here to help you. You've had a rather frightening night."

Instant paranoia, and a short, barked laugh. "I suppose so. Has it got to the press already? Tattlecrime?"

"Not yet," he says, knotting the first stitch. "It's only my inference. You are a victim of attempted murder, Will. Tonight your life was put in peril."

Will shifts, nausea rising sour and guilty in his throat.

"Not a victim. I was doing my job." He shouldn't say the next part, but he does anyway. "Did it all wrong, though. I doubt they'll let me back in."

Dr. Lecter glances up, a curious plea to continue. This headache is loosening Will's tongue.

"I wasn't even supposed to be there. Went to the crime scene off the clock because I didn't get to analyse it during the day. Not properly. Too many distractions—I couldn't think." He inhales, half-laughing. Shaky. "I saw the killer before he saw me. Had my gun out. Aimed."

He doesn't continue, so Dr. Lecter finishes for him.

"You didn't shoot."

Will stares at bleak, white expanse. "No. I didn't shoot."

A taut pause hangs between them. He fights the urge to shrivel up, roll inwards like a pill bug, like woodlice.

When he was nine, he wanted to be an entomologist. The phase lasted less than a year and his father couldn't stand a second of it. Admittedly, it's strange for your son to start bringing in insects like stray dogs, hiding them in unused tupperware—but it was something to do in those sweltering seasons. Especially when bugs would push and pry regardless.

Something other than kicking stones under a bloody sun, clothes sticky, gravel sore. Wandering far and wide, streets and swamps and wherever listlessness pulled him, all alone in the womb of summer. Water fights and fist fights and the laughter of children his age as he sat on steaming curbs, red welts staining his legs. Watching the world and its horror. Studying humanity, how to be a person. How to be.

Memories ache like bruises. Will has never liked summer, damp torridity beneath a sky of scars. Away from the south, it isn't so bad. Everything is mild here—the clouds linger with permanence.

He does like it here. Maybe he should move up north.

"May I ask why?"

It takes a moment to recall the conversation, shake back into his body. When he does, a serpentine sickness writhes in his chest, spitting irritation because it is easy.

"It's none of your business, Doctor. I just didn't. That's why."

Dr. Lecter ties off another knot, unreactive.

"Forgive me. I didn't mean to pry." His tone is raw, like fresh meat. Almost sincerity.

No, it is sincerity. That was an overreaction—he shouldn't have said that. God.

"Sorry," he says, fingers twitching. "I'm not feeling like myself. Didn't mean to… Sorry."

"No need." Needle pushing in. "You've been through a traumatic event. It was unprofessional of me to probe the sore."

Needle sliding out. Will loosens, but a realisation strikes him all the same. A rather unpleasant one.

"You speak more like a therapist than a doctor."

From the corner of his eye, Dr. Lecter gleams.

"Coincidentally, I am considering switching fields. Physiology to psychiatry, the remarkable magnitude of the mind."

Coincidentally, Will has never liked therapists.

When someone is rotten from birth, everyone can see it. School counselors, screening specialists, even street preachers—they all smelled the same dirt in him. Sink fangs into the abnormalities, lick the dirt from their gums.

He knows how therapists are. Always placid, placating, spinning pompous accusations from lace and silk, plump cotton wool. Eye contact like a spear. Staring at him, this puddle of neuroses and illness, contaminated water. Contagious.

Tortured little boy, bruised knees and split lips. Teary eyes, even in violence. Broken dam. Everything is wrong. God's first defect.

Will knows the inside of his mind. He doesn't need anyone clawing through crevices, teeth bared for a piece of him. Ravenous. Salivating. Scraping for meat.

"Why are you considering?" Will finally asks, running a jerky thumb along the table. Pressing into ridges.

"I killed someone yesterday."

It is delivered without hesitation, without a pause. Will is softened by an emotion he can't quite name.

"How?"

"More accurately, I couldn't save someone." Dr. Lecter looks up, gaze unreadable. "But it felt like killing them."

Quietly, Will considers this. "You're an emergency room surgeon. It has to happen from time to time."

"It happened one time too many." Hands freezing, only for a moment. "I think I would enjoy fixing minds instead of bodies. Nobody dies as a result of therapy, and there are always other opportunities to pursue for my anatomical passions."

Will swallows, feeling far heavier than usual. Boulder on his chest. Mountain on his shoulders.

"How does it feel?"

"Poignant," Dr. Lecter says after a beat. "Revelatory. It is a feeling impossible to translate."

Will turns again, staring everywhere but his eyes. Hair gelled and carefully parted. High, jutting cheekbones. Soft lips, like fresh plum.

A thunder of dread surges in his bones. Dread, and sparkling intrigue.

"In the heads of killers, I haven't found revelation," he murmurs. "I've found rot. Festering in every corner like overripe fruit."

"Maybe your killers haven't found the revelation you seek." The final stitch pulls through, elegant and thin. "Tell me. Is that why you didn't shoot your killer? Afraid of projecting those thoughts, mirroring his desires?"

"Tell *me*. Is that why you're incapable of minding your own business?"

“My apologies. I overstepped my bounds.”

Will pauses, then splutters sharp laughter, curling loud and honest from his stomach. He’s acting rather volatile today; watching Dr. Lecter scramble to hasty apologies highlights this.

He blinks, mildly amused but mostly dumbfounded.

“We’ve spent about ten minutes apologising to each other,” Will explains, a smile in his voice. “It’s fine. I don’t know why I’m…”

“You interest me, Will.” Swiftly, he replaces his gloves and takes a square of gauze. “I prefer it when patients are brutally honest. It is necessary in order to provide suitable care.”

“First time someone has said that about my conversational flaws.”

His lips curve, a thin smile. “I assume your honesty has stirred conflict among your peers. Your temperament is an unintended but comfortable barrier. It holds safety.”

“Calm down, Doctor.” Will touches his shoulder, tracing numb stitches. “You’re not a psychiatrist yet.”

“No, I’m not. But observation comes intuitively to me, even when I wish it didn’t.”

Dr. Lecter studies Will, a glint of understanding in his eyes. He knows Will feels the same. It doesn’t need to be spoken.

Cunning.

Somewhat free to move, Will slips from the table and rolls his shoulder, testing movement—inevitably limited. Aching pain shudders through.

“I don’t regret not pulling the trigger,” he says suddenly, adjusting fogged glasses. Saying the words aloud solidifies their existence. “It was the right thing to do. I don’t regret it.”

Dr. Lecter slowly nods, gaze sliding as he paces. Analytical but ambiguous. The psychiatry community will adore him.

Then, a thunder of certainty. Will sits upright. “I’m quitting my job.”

“What will you do instead?”

“Graduate school.” Speaking aloud. Solid and true and real. “Forensic science. Somewhere far from the south.”

“Back to the nest of academia,” Dr. Lecter muses. “Away from the nest of home.”

“Never felt like a nest to me.”

“What did it feel like?”

He hesitates. “Somewhere big, busy. Impermanent. Like a motel.”

Dr. Lecter tilts his head, jaw catching the light. “Did you move often?”

Spiked paranoia, replaced by a curt laugh. “Now you’re intentionally playing therapist.”

“Perhaps I am.” A quiet, teasing smile. “Sit down, please. I am going to apply your dressing.”

He sits opposite Will, legs crossed and hands on lap. Emergency room etiquette temporarily squandered, then. The angle makes it difficult to avoid eye contact—is that on purpose?

“You can emphasise intuitively with the people around you,” he starts, reaching for a gauze square. Will knows where this is going. “Tell me. When I walked in here, what impression did you make of me?”

Debating social niceties, he settles on truth.

“Upper class, respected. Skilled at your work. Image-conscious.” Then, the afterthought. “I thought you could be a serial killer. Strong build, hard to read. Surgical knowledge. Charm.”

He smiles blithely. “Charm?”

“In the stereotypical sense. I don’t find you charming.”

“Not yet.”

Will blinks. “Yet?”

“You will be coming back here. Which reminds me…” Dr. Lecter hands him a sheet and a business card.

“I’ve prescribed you antibiotics to prevent infection and acetaminophen for pain relief. Mild irritation is to be expected—this includes itching and tightness, but if any other issues with the injury arise, call me. If not, you must return here in a week so I can remove your sutures.”

Through the lingering haze, this takes a moment to process.

“You specifically?” Will stares between Dr. Lecter’s eyes. “Don’t you have patients?”

“I always remove my patients’ sutures. While I trust the competency of my colleagues, I do prefer completing the process myself to ensure safety.”

“I don’t know if I’ll be in Baltimore for another week. I’m only here for the case.”

Dr. Lecter doesn’t waver. “No plans to extend your stay?”

“Not particularly.” Will watches him. “But I don’t know if I want to go back yet.”

“The decision is entirely yours, Will.”

In lieu of an answer, Will pockets the card and signs the prescription sheet, studying the pen. It’s expensive and inky—a fountain pen.

He is caught staring. “Do you like it?”

“I like it,” Will says mostly to himself. “A little ostentatious for daily use.”

“Perhaps. You have trouble with ostentation?”

“A mild disdain.” Will smiles, and the gesture feels natural; more skin than candle wax.

Dr. Lecter shifts to the dressing. “Be still for me, please.”

He complies as the gauze is secured, sealing the sides with medical tape. Will is adjusting to this touch, the strong tenderness of these hands. Not liking, but tolerating. Somewhat.

“Very good,” he murmurs, wrapping around the bandage. Hands sliding under the armpit— Will almost recoils. A stabbing in the armpit severs the axillary artery, vein and brachial plexus all at once. Dr. Lecter obviously knows this. Will wonders if he’s taking pleasure in it —*I know you know I know.* This soft and pulpy field, the shrieking pulse beneath.

That smell again, headier up close. Hints of musk, a distinct masculinity. Cologne isn’t allowed in hospitals, so it must be his natural scent. Like air, Will breathes him in until the dressing is tied.

He steps back, eyes glimmering. Unreadable. “You did well.”

“Doing what?” Will says dryly.

Dr. Lecter doesn’t reply, instead handing him a clear bag of medical supplies and rattling instructions. Gloves off, there is a jolt of connection when their hands brush and Will shies away from the touch like a burn.

Nodding and nodding and nodding, his gaze darts from the wall to his hairline, collarbone to nose bridge, left eye to right eye. Dr. Lecter’s irises are like apple seeds. His pupils are pinpricks beneath the light.

“Not fond of eye contact either?” His tone is light with curiosity, but Will unapologetically continues to avoid it.

“No. And I’m not explaining that one.”

“No need. Would you like a new shirt?”

He blinks, arms hugging on instinct. Will didn’t realise he’d grown comfortable.

“Um. Yes, please.”

Intercom blaring, nurses chattering. The swing of heavy doors, time blurring as Dr. Lecter comes in and out with a folded scrub top.

“We can match,” Will mutters, and he gleams in response.

“Would you like me to—”

“No. Thank you.”

Dr. Lecter accepts his abruptness without judgement, without insistence. It’s refreshing to be treated neutrally by a medical professional, without questions about this and that, recommendations for X and Y. *Professional curiosity.* Like fruit flies to a rotting market.

Still, it is a struggle to dress himself, shoulder screeching and groaning with every movement. He can’t raise it without violently shooting electricity. This is humiliating. At least Dr. Lecter has the decency to lower his gaze, until the moment stretches on and on and it becomes evident that he can’t do this alone.

“Um,” Will says, shame thick in his voice. The air is scalding. “Could you, uh…”

A nod, then Dr. Lecter is holding his arms and slipping the shirt on. Bare skin. One hand at the small of his back, flirting with fine hairs. Terrible—this gnawing instinct. This vulnerability.

Comfort is a vulgar and fleeting thing. It disperses in a heartbeat.

“Thank you,” he mumbles, scrambling for his jacket.

Dr. Lecter remains poised and still. “Of course. I look forward to your next visit, Will.”

It sounds ominous. You shouldn’t leave hospitals with the hope of coming back.

Will rises, swaying gently on his feet. The world dips and flickers with vertigo, the abnormal intensity of Dr. Lecter’s stare. He can’t stop this curiosity, the desire to unravel and understand. It is instinctual, inevitable. Like a parasite.

“If I do visit.” The words cut between them like a scalpel. Finally, Will dares to meet his gaze. “Goodbye, Dr. Lecter.”

When he exits the room, he doesn’t look back, even with phantom fingers blistering his neck. Eyes scorching through his skull all the way to the car park.

Will swallows his nausea. The eyes continue to burn.

Chapter End Notes

hi, thanks for reading! i have some of ch2 written... might finish that up by next week. hope u enjoyed :)

# what i thought were faces

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The night is soft and simmering.

Smeared moonlight leads a pearly path to the hotel and Will follows with uneven, hasty steps. Sweat-sheened skin. Sun-bleached gravel. One hand near his gun, the other in a tight and painful fist.

Hotel key card, a stuttered beep. Will sways at the hotel doorway and scans the room to ensure everything is undisturbed. Chair leg over the same floorboard crack. Pen pointed perfectly at a case file. Nothing moved, nothing changed. Today the space is relatively safe.

Somewhat eased, he staggers forward and sinks face-first into the bed, slamming into his shoulder. Brutality bursts upon impact but the pain is hot and grounding—an anchor between mind and body. Right now, he really needs an anchor.

And so he withers.

Lead limbs, lead corpse, wilting into cheap covers like quicksand. Existence melts like ice on his tongue, the universe tasting and chewing and swallowing him whole because it is warm and wet inside. Here he is, the womb of the world.

But Will cannot stay in the womb forever. Where does he go from here?

New Orleans tastes sour on his tongue, but he shouldn't linger. Memory molders Baltimore. There is nothing for him here and nothing to keep him here, except for one man's peculiar request—Dr. Lecter and his odd insistence. Dr. Lecter and his…

It doesn't matter. He'll book his flight and head back to New Orleans, back to the same streets and same apartment but not the same job. Not anymore. Will is quitting even if they don't fire him.

He can't keep doing this: case after case, kill after kill. Situations where he needs to pull the trigger and he can't.

*Because you know what will happen if you do. You know what it will do to you.*

Bad feelings, bad thoughts. Focus on stiff bedsheets, the Baltimore draft. This city, it growls like an animal. Like something starved.

*Get up.* Wind rattling thin windows. *Get up and move.*

Eternity gapes and yawns. Will relents to decay, this peaceful nihility until the riot of colour behind his eyes begins to warp and bend, shifting into something solid and tangible. Something that only belongs in his nightmares. That can't ever crawl over.

*Move.*

He shakes into action, sweat damp and sour on unwashed sheets. The staff here don't clean the rooms here and Will is grateful for it—the absence of phantom eyes. Lurking ghosts and nosy strangers invading the enclave of his mind.

Will is intimate with paranoia. He knows it like the lines of his palms, the hollow of his ribs; everything that is tangible and true. Someone could always be watching—always waiting to strike. Safety is a kindly packaged concept for the blind and privileged, because everyone wants to believe life is bound in bubble wrap and soft wool. It's the promise of happy endings, the defeat of villainy. God in the sky and Satan in the ground.

There is no stopping the monsters under his bed, but he can sleep with guns on the bedside and knives beneath the pillow. He can stay vigilant and smart. Self-preserving. Sharpen his swords and polish his armour.

But he cannot control time, this slippery and faltering thing.

Bathroom, cold faucet. Water gushing through cupped hands. Will scrubs his face hard enough to bruise but the stench of slaughter persists, a festering physicality. Scuttling spiders on his skin. Nausea in his blood. Sensations that sponge baths can't fix.

Will stares at the mirror but avoids meeting his eyes. The glass is dusty and splintered. After scrubbing himself raw, his reflection spits out the impression of uncooked meat.

To delay the inevitable, Will downs more whiskey than he ought to in a bathroom tumbler and carries the dregs to bed. The scrub top is discarded on the chair, the cotton shirt as its replacement. Alcohol won't stop the nightmares but it might stave them away—knock him out before REM sleep strikes. It works on occasion. It could work tonight.

He switches off the lamp and darkness, thick and oppressive, presses on his chest like a cadaver. Stitches straining. Gored muscle beneath. He hasn't fully drawn the blinds—it is his habit of hypervigilance, maintaining constant and clear sightlines. Hazy moonlight gleams on the tumbler, distorting the shadows of hung coats and furniture. It twists them into motion and movement, something resembling life. Something resembling the Jester.

No. He needs to think of something else. Anything else.

Will scrambles through memory, floating from the taxi drive to the pharmacy trip to the emergency room: Dr. Lecter. Smooth voice, nimble fingers, his scent melting into the stitches. That peculiar affability, his nonsensical emphasis on remaining in Baltimore for suture removal although they can be removed by anyone. Unnecessary and presumptuous. Bewildering.

Intriguing. Will wants to know more. *Dr. Hannibal Lecter.*

*Han,* a puff of air, tongue teasing the palate. *Nni,* the sweet ricochet into null space. *Bal,* the gentle pop of parched lips, a soft-sounding cessation. *Hannibal.* The name has a pleasant ring to it.

Will breathes his name into vacancy, rolls the syllables on his tongue. Hannibal, Hannibal. It isn't a name he's heard before. It rhymes with cannibal. Everyone thought the Jester was a cannibal, but they were wrong because he was…

Thoughts spiralling. *Stay on track.* Dr. Lecter, beguiling eyes and thin smile. Silvery inflection. Likely European—maybe northern, maybe eastern.

He killed a man yesterday. He stitched Will together today. Held him like he was leaking ichor. Nails trimmed under latex, ripe lips brushing tissue. Cool composure, a solid lake of ice. Unreflective but soothing. Soothing when…

Will drifts into a doze. For a fragile hour, he is dreamless and mellow.

Inevitably, it doesn't last.

A flash of colour, then light seeps in from absence. The Jester is here and writhing beside him. Eyes gaping, columns of dusk. A monsoon of blood. Knife glinting, mouth carved in a smile, pinning him down and raising his arm to—

Will chokes awake, fumbling for the lamp. His arm twists. Crunches. A hand smashes into an empty tumbler, an empty tumbler crashes into wood. There is a short and thick thud, then the consequent flood of amber.

Great. He needs a towel.

When he stands, the world trembles. Will tries to catch his breath on the way to the bathroom, somewhat succeeds, then dumps the sopping shirt in the bathtub. He returns with a towel to spread across soaked sheets then crawls onto the bed, limbs curling around the dry patch. He rejects the tainted space. Everything is contaminated. Everything rots.

Inhale, exhale. The cruel hiss of night. Owls shrieking, foxes squealing. Alarm clock blinking past four.

Will considers his options. He could lie here awake for hours, but that would be torturous—the less time spent with his thoughts the better. He could have another drink, but that wouldn't give him anything but a putrid hangover. What else is there?

Objectively speaking, he could masturbate. This hotel floor is empty so nobody would hear, and there aren't any secret microphones around. Will checks for them daily. It could lift his stress, knock him out for a potential few hours.

He isn't one for frequent masturbation—his mind grows too analytical to relax. No barriers, only floodgates, broken for everything fetid and foul to mix within a deluge of rancid associations. Fantasy is never a safe space for Will. He needs distraction, something to filter the putrefaction. Isolate him in pleasure and ease.

Still, it's been a while since he's masturbated. Since he's had sex at all, really. There's no harm in trying.

So he draws the blinds.

On the bed, Will snakes down his boxers and rests a hand on his cock, palming tentatively. Pleasure is muted by dumb discomfort, the foreign familiarity of clammy fingers on something dry and limp, unresponsive to action. Lacklustre. Tedious. He regards himself scientifically, like meat to dissect. Failed experiment. Frankenstein's monster.

This isn't working.

His thoughts are growing foggy from the whiskey but still present, still here. Will needs to focus on something that isn't himself or the Jester or the cases or murders or—

The scrub top is draped over the chair and he stares only for a moment. A long, stretching moment. His cock stiffens.

Will acts before shame can stop him.

The top smells faintly of Dr. Lecter, his cold and clean imprint. Will slides the shirt near his swelling cock, fabric skimming nerves, teasing pressure. He starts with steady, cautious strokes, hands slick with leaking precome. Then he squeezes tighter. A spark of heat, of blinding euphoria.

This is ridiculous. This is demented and juvenile.

His cock strains with pressure and he rubs with new fervour, blind and messy, lazily grinding his hips. Febrile breath, hissing through teeth. Dr. Lecter murmuring into lacerations, touching him, touching *inside* him. Aphrodisia. Drugged on delight and desire, this absence of thought and contingency. Blank space. Distilled to pure, potent biology.

Thick heat ripples in his loins, rising and swelling in heady dilations. Body arched, hips fucking harder and harder into his hand, cock quivering from wet friction and the scrub top beneath. Shoulder burning and aching. Faster, faster, nerve endings sparkling, a world of sensitivity. Voice, hands, mouth; this zenith of pleasure. His vision whitens.

Pressure bursts open like a wound.

Will spills onto the scrub top with sick, lewd heaves. Afterglow twinkles like the sea, and he floats and drinks and bathes for seconds, mere seconds, before disgust comes slamming down like God's palm. The soaked sheets, his soaked shirt. Hot breath and short pants. The salty stench of come and appetite, this venal degeneracy.

What in hell did he just do?

The following silence is condemnatory. Will switches off the lamp.

Why in hell did he just do that?

In the mercy of darkness, he relents to the judgement of the universe, of fictional deities and demons. That was… He can't even explain it. There is no rationalisation, no reasonable explanation—it was animalistic. Carnal. Like a bitch in heat. Completely unprecedented, utterly—

Pleasurable. His brain feels fucked out, languid and dizzy. He is veiled in the rare bliss of lethargy, this private pit of fluid and filth. Will slumps into unconsciousness and for once, sleep cradles him with gentle hands.

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Damp sweat, dead heat. The boiling belly of afternoon. Will wakes to a hammering skull and screaming flame in his shoulder, like fire ants nesting in the meat.

He sits up and it finds him instantly. The scrub top lies soiled and crumpled on the bed. His mess is dry, still splattered on the fabric. Memory floods in like a spate.

Maybe Will has finally lost it. Years spent teetering on the cliff edge of sanity, and a stray breeze ruined it all. His downfall, emblematic damnation. The final psychological debasement.

Or maybe he’s thinking irrationally. All people act uncharacteristically after being stabbed. Will is mostly normal and relatively sane—it was a bad day. A bad night. This is unnecessary vitriol, self-inflicted acrimony. This is—

His shoulder throbs, a scathing interruption. Beating flesh, pulsing marrow. Will probes the area and electricity explodes through his arm, suddenly and seethingly itchy.

That doesn't seem normal.

He clambers to the bathroom as the world dips and sways, sullied scrub top in hand. It is stiff with pale crust and Will throws it in the bathtub before leaning on the sink, breathing in. He props his shoulder near the mirror. Then he unpeels the bandages.

That doesn't seem normal at all.

The stitches bulge outwards, taut and thin against swollen skin. There is a stink permeating from the wound and yellow fluid stains the bandages, the edges of the fissure.

Will presses his index finger against the mirror and checks for the gap between reflections. The gap is there—it isn’t one-way. He is alone and safe, safe and alone but that doesn’t matter because something is seriously wrong with his shoulder and no instinctive, paranoia-induced rituals will solve that.

Blood rises to a roaring din in his ears. Did Dr. Lecter stitch him together wrong? It’s a doubtful conclusion but theoretically possible. If not that, maybe the problem is his body, the cells woven in defective skeins. DNA warped. Genetic horror. Everything gone wrong, still going wrong.

To start, Will hasn’t slept past noon since he was spitefully sixteen and holed up in Thibodaux on a child-sized bender—proof of that ugly, twisted gene. That's the first thing gone wrong today. He’s a morning person like his father, always has been. Work all morning,

sleep all evening, except Will Graham keeps working till his legs fold and vision blackens. Insomnia is a peevish disorder because it takes pride in inconvenience. His brain has a penchant for self-immolation.

Redressing the wound is a sloppy process. It is too reactive, too tender, and Will knows what he is supposed to do next. *Call Dr. Lecter.* It's common sense, logic ringing flatly in his head. *He won't know you jerked off to the shirt he gave you. That you touched yourself to his memory.*

At this point, his thoughts are past self-immolation. This is autosarcophagy. Mental seppuku.

"Mr. Graham?"

He stops.

The hotel checkout was hours ago—he was supposed to be outside. The airport. His flight.

Time skips and stutters as Will throws on the closest shirt he can find. His breath is too short and his shoulder too stiff and everything, every single thing is going wrong.

"About time, Mr. Graham!"

He opens the door to flushed cheeks and thick hair, dark grey dusting the roots. Will stares past her, squinting at the pale glow of corridor lights. The speckled popcorn ceiling.

"Ms. Thorn."

The hotel manager. He bites back the reflexive *ma'am* , and she watches him with a caustic blend of irritation, apprehension and pity.

Will has only spoken to her twice but Ms. Thorn lives in the hotel. Stern but kind, albeit slightly condescending—she talks to Will in similar tones used with small children and the elderly.

"Mind my honesty, but you do look a mess." An accurate observation. "Had quite the night out, hm?"

"You could say that," Will says flatly.

"Mhm. You do realise it is three hours past checkout?"

Will taps his fingers together, fixes his gaze on the carpet. Bare legs, bare feet. Vulnerability.

"Sorry." He meets her gaze, an instant regret. "Could you, uh, give me a minute? Please."

Ms. Thorn studies the state of him, the room behind him. "Well. I'll let you off with an extra hour. One hour to get yourself together, but then I need you out of my hair, alright? I have a business to run here, Mr. Graham."

Will nods. His arm shudders. "Okay. An hour—okay. Thank you."

“Don’t thank me. Just get packing. And give yourself a good clean up.”

Will nods, shutting the door with a short and sharp snap.

Daylight rots as he gets ready, washing roughly and then packing his belongings. His shoulder burns, pain heightening by the minute, and the room is stifling even with windows open and AC whirring. He feels disconnected, diaphanous. Chest tight and body fevered. Vision blurring at the edges.

When he checks out, breaking dusk trembles over the lip of the horizon, visible through a swathe of clouds. Will wavers at the curb, holding his suitcase handle like a lifeline. The world shimmers. Lungs squeezing into a barbed wire knot. He grinds a fist into his sternum to unravel the blockage, but the pressure remains.

In this chasm of stretching and idle hours, the problem has grown like a tumour. Like something cancerous. Like something he can’t ignore.

Will understands the tightness and swelling, this grating itch. But the rash, smudged and screaming at his skin? This limited mobility, the breathless clenching in his chest?

Dr. Lecter’s contact card sits in his pocket like an insult. *If any other issues with the injury arise, call me*. He spoke impartially. Clinical concern. Time has spun full circle and in the dim of early evening he grips his phone, rigid with obstinacy. Last night, memories of last night—God. Will can’t call him. This is impossible, he can’t. He doesn’t even need to, he—

No. There’s something wrong with his shoulder and he needs to speak to a doctor about it. This is basic self-preservation. This is fundamental rationality.

Will swallows and his saliva is firm like stone. His throat feels thinner than before, a coarse plinth of meat and tissue. He pulls out his phone.

Then he calls.

The phone rings once. Twice. At the third, it takes every shard of discipline in Will not to slam his phone into a wall and decimate the splinters.

At the fourth ring, Dr. Lecter answers.

“Good evening, Will. This is a pleasant surprise. Is something the matter?”

For a moment he can’t speak, fire shooting hot through his arm. Even though Dr. Lecter claims otherwise, it sounds like he was expecting the call.

“Um.” He takes a moment to collect himself. “Something is wrong with my arm.”

There is shuffling on the line. The soft click of a door.

“Tell me your symptoms, please.”

“Uh… It hurts. The whole area is red. Swollen. Itchy. It’s messing with my breathing—I can’t breathe normally.”

“When did this start?” he asks, completely lukewarm.

“When I woke up, I think. Maybe last night. Got worse through the day. Could it be an infection?”

“No.” Dr. Lecter almost sounds offended. “It wouldn’t be, although this may be an issue that will lead to infection. Will, I need you to come to the ER immediately.”

He blanches. “Immediately?”

“Yes. I’ll book you a car—you cannot drive in this state, and I need you to stay on the line. Is that alright?”

Head pounding, pounding, pounding. *I have a flight to catch. I pay for my own rides. Is this an emergency?* Brain disconnected from the tongue. “Okay.”

“Very good. May I have your address?”

He stays on hold while Dr. Lecter books the taxi, silence sated by the ringing in his ears. Cars roll past, headlights gleaming and Will shields his eyes, draining the last dregs of his energy.

“Are you there, Will?”

Will blinks past the unfurling tension in his head. “I’m here.”

“I’ve booked the taxi; it will be arriving shortly. Are you outside?”

“Mm.” A stuttered, shaky exhale. “My flight. It leaves at seven.”

“Then we must hurry,” His cadence is undecipherable. “Is there any fluid or pus leaking from the wound?”

“No. I don’t know. There might’ve been—I can’t remember. It didn’t look normal.”

There is a brief pause filled by the rumble of the city. Then, Dr. Lecter says, “I believe you may be experiencing an allergic reaction to the sutures.”

Will stills. “Allergic reaction?”

“It is rare but entirely possible,” he continues, far too calm for the situation. “Are you aware of any current allergies?”

“I had hay fever when I was a kid. Grew out of it. No others that I know of.”

Dr. Lecter considers this with a low hum. “When you arrive, continue to the reception and request to see me. Do not go anywhere until I collect you, even if the receptionist tells you otherwise. Do you understand?”

The delivery is unusual, but Will is too exhausted to question it. “I understand.”

“Good. I must return to work for now, but I’ll be waiting for you at the hospital. Safe travels, Will.”

“Bye.”

He hangs up sooner than socially acceptable and sinks down to the curb, body hunched like a child. Too vulnerable. Too unsafe. Will presses his back to the wall instead, neck scraping chipped bricks, and waits for the taxi with twitchy unease.

Dr. Lecter doesn’t call back. Will is grateful.

Heady leather, the scent of quiet luxury. In the vehicle, he sticks out like a sore thumb, cheap pyrite in a diadem of gold. Still, the ride is peaceful with scarce conversation so Dr. Lecter earns some credit. This was a kind gesture, but shockingly excessive. Is this a typical patient-surgeon exchange in Baltimore?

When he arrives, Will thanks the driver with a five-dollar tip and is countered with a pointed glare. It’s the customary percentage here but he’s evidently used to more. Will considers searching for change, but the silence stretches on and on like a taut, snapping string. *Jesus. Just go.* Dr. Lecter is paying the fee anyway. Leave that problem with him.

One hazy blink, and then he is standing in the hospital. Gaunt bones, fluorescent light. Fecal negativity. A mother and daughter argue in scathing tones and he feels their anger on his neck. A couple sit in mournful silence and their desolation thickens in his throat.

“Can I help you?”

It’s the receptionist. She is young and sullen, thin hair pulled back in a ponytail. Early twenties, fresh from university. Middle class. Unsatisfied with her career, her life—caught in limbo while making ends meet. Her eyes hang heavy with stagnancy, early adulthood fatigue.

“I’m here to see Dr. Lecter,” he says. His voice is surprisingly ragged.

“He isn’t available.” She regards him with unflinching indifference. “You need to book an appointment.”

“I have an appointment,” Will says even though he’s unsure he does. “I came in his taxi.”

The receptionist’s eyes crawl to the clock.

“You aren’t authorized to see him.” A tense pause. Her indignance withers. “But you can wait in the waiting room. If he doesn’t come, then I don’t know what to tell you.”

Before he can mumble his thanks, the double doors swing open and there he is, striding tall and prideful into view. Hair stiff. Eyes bright and warm. With the instant embarrassment comes a clashing, surging tranquillity, gently pulping his bones.

“Will,” Dr. Lecter greets, lilted and melodic. “He’s with me, Francesca. Thank you.”

Will should reply with something cold and clever and caustic, but his body is screeching and nothing comes to mind. Coherent speech slips between his teeth like ash.

“Today we have our own room,” he says. Psychiatrist stare. Dead-eyed, fish-like. Logging his silence. “Follow me please.”

Considering Dr. Lecter’s apparent urgency, it’s odd how they aren’t heading to the emergency room. Soon they arrive small, plain room almost identical to the ER, but not quite.

“Is this your office?” Will asks tentatively.

“No.” Dr. Lecter smiles but doesn’t explain further. Odd. Biting down deja vu, Will squirms onto the examination table.

“Allow me.”

Will permits him to snake off his jacket and hang it neatly at the door. He also permits him to slide off the damp shirt beneath, even as he tenses and writhes. It is bone-deep, this shuddering apprehension. But within it lies a tremble of something different. Something more.

“How was your journey?” Dr. Lecter asks as he unwraps the dressing.

“How do you think?” Too harsh, too angry. Vulnerability makes him hostile. “Sorry. I liked the driver—and the car. Thank you.”

“I’m pleased to hear it.” Torn gauze, familiar touch. His skin shivers less than usual. “I have placed faith in Richard’s services for years. It is always pleasant to be reminded that my faith is not displaced.”

“He’s your personal driver?”

“Yes.”

“You do that for all your patients?” Sharper, he adds, “your one-time emergency room patients?”

“Of course,” Dr. Lecter speaks as if it’s the most ordinary thing in the world. “And now, you are a two-time emergency room patient.”

“This isn’t the emergency room.”

“You shouldn’t drink with the painkillers,” he says in lieu of an answer.

Will blinks.

“They weren’t killing the pain.” Frowning, he adds, “How’d you know I’d been drinking?”

“A doctor’s nose. I can smell it on your breath.”

“From last night?”

Dr. Lecter smiles again. “Do you have a habit of nightly drinking?”

“You’re dodging the question.”

“I first noticed my keen sense of smell as a young man. I was aware one of my tutors had hepatitis even before she was.”

He’s teasing. Will stifles a smile.

“Implying something, Doctor?”

“Not at all.” A jesting glance, then he returns to the main issue. “This is a severe allergic reaction. Another day without medical intervention and you would’ve had a nasty infection on your hands.”

Will takes this in, focusing on heavy air, the plush table beneath him. “I’ve had stitches before. Never reacted like this.”

“Suture hypersensitivity can be caused by a variety of reasons. Your reaction could be triggered by the suture material itself or by chemicals used in the manufacturing process, such as dyes or coatings. Until we conduct a skin prick test, it is impossible to tell.”

“Your bloodhound nose can’t sniff out allergies?”

Something strange flickers in Dr. Lecter’s expression, dissipating quickly.

“Unfortunately not. Olfactory perception is crucial for navigating the world, but it cannot detect everything. It can only fill in the gaps of sight, the hollows lacking substance.” A cutting pause. “Do you ever feel hollow, Will?”

He hesitates before answering, settling on reluctant, limited honesty. “Not hollow enough. In my head, everything's a tight squeeze.”

“Your empathy.” Dr. Lecter nods. “You are constantly assuming the perspective of others. Brimming with foreign emotions, unknown feelings. That leaves little room to exist with yourself. For yourself.”

“Joy,” he says, biting back a snarl. “Psychoanalysis is just what I came here for. What’s got you so interested?”

“You. Our first conversation deeply intrigued me. To tell the truth, my curiosity has bled through to our second.”

Will scrubs a shaky hand over his face. “Are all doctors in Baltimore like this?”

“I hope not. I pride myself on individuality.” His tone is blithe. “You regard your own as a flaw.”

Silence drags between them like slit skin. Eventually, Will shatters the tension. He feels compelled to speak for a reason he can’t quite name.

“My individuality differs from yours, Dr. Lecter. I’d say your ‘curiosity’ and party tricks charm people. Mine invoke scorn.”

“I haven’t charmed you.”

“No. You haven’t.” Will pinches skin through his slacks, eyeing the clock. “I need to leave soon. My flight.”

“A moment for your wound, then we will visit the allergist.” Dr. Lecter smiles. As always, it is enchantingly uncanny. “Be at ease, Will. Place your faith in me.”

The air is thick. The room is cold. Will meets eyes with Dr. Lecter and swiftly, as quick as spring thaw, lowers his gaze.

Chapter End Notes

lol this took WAY longer than a week... but here it is! thank you for reading <3

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